

16. EXPERIMENTS ON A CAPTIVE MUNGOOSE (*Herpestes galera*) WITH INSECT-FOOD. (G. A. K. M.)

1899.

May 27. Offered a *Rhopalocampa forestan* to a very young female Mongoose (*Herpestes galera*); she rushed at it, but on touching it with her nose drew back sharply (her eyesight was still but feeble); so I partially cut off its wings and let it flutter on the floor, whereupon she ran at it several times but did not attempt to eat it. I then gave her four *T. senegalensis* (without wings) which she ate greedily, and on being offered a *Mylothris agathina* she promptly seized it, but immediately jumped back so violently that she rolled head over heels. The way she shook her head clearly demonstrated the distastefulness of the butterfly, and she would not let me bring it anywhere near her. I then offered a *Belenois mesentina*, but with the same result; she refused to touch it every time. Thinking this might be due to her experience with the *Mylothris*, I put the *Belenois* aside and offered it ten minutes later, when it was eaten with undoubted relish. An *Acrwa caldarena* and *A. axina* were then refused, but without being tasted, the smell being apparently quite sufficient. More than an hour afterwards I again tried her with *R. forestan*, but she would not touch it, though whether this was due to fear of its size and violent fluttering, or to some unpleasant smell, I could not well decide; any way she did not attempt to bite it.

June 3. Gave mongoose two *Terias brigitta*, two *Teracolus omphale*, and two *Belenois severina*. All these had their wings cut off and were thrown on the ground, when they were promptly seized and eaten. A *Mylothris agathina* was then offered in the same manner, and even this was eaten.

- June 4. Mongoose ate three *Terias brigitta*, three *T. senegalensis*, two *Precis sesamus*, three *Byblia ilithyia*, one *Pyramcis cardui*, and two *Mylothris agathina*.
- „ 7. Mongoose ate three *Acræa axina* and actually one *Limnas chrysippus*. Whether this eating of evidently-unpalatable species is due to the voracious appetite of the animal or to a youthful lack of discrimination it is difficult to say, but probably the former is the truer explanation. I could not observe any marked signs of its having found the insects unpleasant.
- „ 11. Gave mongoose an *Acræa caldarena*, which was promptly eaten. An *L. chrysippus* was then thrown down; she seized it at once, but quickly ejected it with unmistakable signs of distaste. An *A. axina* was treated in a precisely similar manner, so that she seemed to have learned wisdom. Later on she was offered a *Phymateus morbillosus*; she made several attempts to eat it, but its very unpleasant smell deterred her each time.

[These results are interesting and in some respects remarkable. It is probable that some of the apparently-inconsistent results were due to the fact that a voracious insect-eater in extreme youth was gaining its first experience of certain species. Thus the apparent fear of the large Hesperid *Rhopalocampta* was probably, as Mr. Marshall suggests, the inherent timidity of a young animal in the presence of a strange sound and a method of wing-vibration very different from anything which it had witnessed before. The treatment of *Mylothris* suggests that the animal was startled at first by something unusual in taste or smell, but that when it became accustomed to the experience the Pierine was no better defended against the mongoose than against mantides. On the other hand, the behaviour towards *Acræas* and *chrysippus* seems to indicate a progressive recognition of distastefulness or unwholesome qualities. It is unfortunate that the experiments were not greatly extended and prolonged.—E. B. P.]